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This document contains **SAY Soccer's recommendations** for its members to adhere to when your state's return-to-play parameters have been established. While SAY Soccer takes pride in our organization's approach to the spirit of 'reasonable flexibility', any protocols should be applied in conjunction with all relevant guidance from USOPC, U.S. Soccer, federal and state authorities, health professionals, and information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). States across the country will look to the Federal Government who issued guidelines for "Opening Up America Again" at www.whitehouse.gov/OpeningAmerica. The three-phased approach based on the advice of public health experts. These steps will help state and local officials when reopening their economies, getting people back to work, and continuing to protect American lives.

United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee (USOPC) Response to COVID-19 [Return to Training for All Sports](#) (state by state protocols apply)

- **USOPC Phases 1-2**
 - Training facilities are closed
 - Train on your own with your own equipment
 - Virtual coaching
- **USOPC Phase 3**
 - Small group training, training facilities not open
 - Group selection protocol, signs and symptoms monitoring process
 - Infection control measures, own equipment, no direct/indirect contact, coach onsite
- **USOPC Phase 4**
 - Regular size group, training facilities open
 - Similar group selection and signs and symptoms monitoring protocols
 - Infection control measures, share equipment (but clean if possible), direct/indirect contact OK
- **USOPC Phase 5**
 - Vaccine or cure developed
 - No restriction, but continue general infection measures

SAY SOCCER RETURN-TO-PLAY RECOMMENDATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

PRIOR TO “PLAY”

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION – USOPC PHASES 3 & 4

These are guidelines to be incorporated prior arriving at and beginning any organized activity.

- Satisfy the Federal Government’s “Opening Up America Again” guidelines.
- Confirm that your state and region allow recreational activity.
- Be aware that although certain restrictions are eased when your state or region moves from one phase to another in the ‘Phased Comeback’ approach, safety precautions must remain in place until there is a universal vaccine or effective treatment for COVID-19 or **appropriate authorities** direct otherwise.
- Establish and communicate to your members a mitigation plan that addresses the primary components of the guidelines your team/club/league will follow. It is highly recommended to use consistent language and protocols from the resources available through the established federal and state authorities.
- Any player, coach, referee, etc. should refrain from participation if, **as defined by the aforementioned authorities**, they:
 - Are experiencing any of established COVID-19 **symptoms**, including but not limited to mild-to-severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and difficulty breathing.
 - Have been in contact with someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days.
 - Are a vulnerable individual and your state and region is in USOPC Phase 1 or 2. A vulnerable individual is an elderly individual and/or an individual with serious underlying health conditions.
- Understand that individual families within your organization may have circumstances or views that compel them to refrain from participation even if return-to-play clearance has been given. No member should be penalized or otherwise pressured should they choose to not participate under these guidelines.
- Provide adequate lines of communication, written documentation and/or post signage for all relevant protocols in any areas necessary to ensure all participants are aware of your mitigation plan.
- Ensure any distancing rules that are expected to be followed are communicated and monitored accordingly.
 - Be proactive in making distancing rules easy to follow by any available means such as spacing in areas for spectators, teams, concessions, restrooms, etc.
 - Volunteers can be asked to monitor and remind participants of distancing rules, especially during peak hours of activity. This can be similar, or as added duties, to a ‘field marshal’ type role.
 - Establish a plan for enforcement if such rules are ignored.
- Limit traffic in areas typically used for in-person meeting locations for coaches, players, parents, spectators, and referees.
- Establish and adhere to a plan for cleaning and disinfecting any structures, facilities, equipment, etc. that participants may come in contact with.
- Consider staggered dates of play for different age groups. Staggered arrivals and or drop offs.

SAY SOCCER RETURN-TO-PLAY RECOMMENDATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

TIME OF ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION – USOPC PHASES 3 & 4

These are guidelines to be incorporated during the time the participants and their supporters arrive and are participating in any organized activity.

- Discourage physical contact between all participants, players, coaches, officials etc. while implementing practical applications of the established guidelines as set forth by the CDC and other governing authorities.
 - Avoid 'high fives' or other types of skin to skin contact on and off the field.
 - Avoid sharing food, drinks, towels, etc.
- Coaches should attempt to observe practical distancing rules as much as possible especially during times of non-active participation.
 - Promote small group training or warm up activities where practical spacing expectations can be realized.
 - Remind players to separate themselves during breaks when training, warming up, during team huddles on game day, sitting on the bench and when waiting to be substituted in a match.
 - When lines or grouping of players are necessary for a particular drill or warm up activity, ensure that it is designed to allow appropriate spacing between participants.
 - Encourage participants, players, coaches, officials etc. should be informed that they are responsible for their own safety, as well as the safety of others. This means that each participant should bring and only use their own personal items such as water bottles, towels, hand sanitizer, protective masks, gloves etc. and not have the expectation of using such items provided by other participants.
 - Avoid shared equipment.
 - Avoid the use of communal sets of 'pinnies' (scrimmage vests) or goalie equipment.
 - Distribute to participants their own pinnie, goalie gear, or other individual equipment for which they are responsible to keep with their soccer gear and use for the season.
 - When possible, have only coaches or other designated individuals set up and collect team training equipment, preferably with disposable gloves.
 - Avoid use of communal game balls that are passed along from one game to the next, unless they are sufficiently wiped down and sanitized between games.
 - Follow CDC guidelines for masks and other face coverings, gloves etc. when appropriate and possible.
- Governing bodies should ensure there is access to protective supplies such as hand sanitizer facial coverings, gloves etc. in as many locations as possible, especially high-traffic areas such as entrances, concession stands, team benches, etc.
- Governing bodies shall not require players (or officials) to wear a mask or face covering during active play while they are on the field and participating in a scheduled match.
- Governing bodies may establish recommendations or requirements for participants (players, coaches, etc.) who are on the sidelines and not on the field participating in a match regarding wearing masks or other face coverings. Regardless, during any organized activity session and/or on the sidelines at games, all participants, including coaches, are encouraged to wear a mask or other face covering.

SAY SOCCER RETURN-TO-PLAY RECOMMENDATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

TIME OF ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT CONT.

- Governing bodies may establish recommendations or requirements for spectators wearing masks or other face coverings during any organized activity in which they are present.
- Players who choose to wear a protective mask or face covering during physical activity may do so, but only during training or warm up sessions (i.e. facial coverings of any sort are not allowed to be worn by players on the field during matches).
- Parents/guardians should be made aware of any reputable guidance and advice from health professionals regarding physical activity while wearing a mask or face covering.
- Coaches and other team personnel should take note of any player engaging in physical activity with a face covering who appears to be struggling, having difficulty breathing, or experiencing a level of exhaustion not commensurate with the current level of activity. In such instances, players should be directed to adjust their level of exertion, take a break, or discontinue using their mask or face covering.
- If their parent/guardian does not approve of the player participating without their mask or face covering, coaches are encouraged to find ways to adjust the activity for that player. If such adjustments are not feasible, or if there are further concerns for the health and safety of the player, team personnel should counsel with the parent/guardian about what level of participation will be appropriate going forward.
- When soccer match play is approved and resumes, the SAY Soccer Rules of Play shall not be altered to accommodate any facial protection requirements that may be mandated by CDC or any other aforementioned governing entities.
- Actively playing in a game environment with a face covering is considered to be an unknown and unsafe situation, which cannot and will not be tolerated.
- If such a restriction is imposed by the powers to be, then organized matches may not be scheduled or played.
- Along similar lines, protective gloves may be worn as they do not pose a safety issue.
- Tournament play is discouraged during this recovery period. As per SAY's Organizational Rules, National SAY is not in the business of promoting or actively administrating tournaments.
- By its nature, the group gatherings, and crowds (players, coaches, officials, spectators, etc.) that a tournament venue generates would at the very least exceed the limits that the CDC healthy environment recommendations are trying to control.
- The playing of 3-5 games in the confined time of a weekend also tends to be especially contrary to promoting a healthy environment for the youth players during this period of recovery.
- The health and safety of the youth players are more important and imperative than the need for them to play in a game(s).

SAY SOCCER RETURN-TO-PLAY RECOMMENDATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

DEPARTURE FROM “PLAY”

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION – USOPC PHASES 3 & 4

These are guidelines to be incorporated by the participants and their supporters during their departure of the organized activity and any subsequent activities and responsibilities.

- Players, coaches, and officials should eliminate traditional post-game handshakes, fist bumps, **etc.** encourage teams to come up with creative ways to show sportsmanship to their opponents after a match has finished.
- Attempt to continue to observe established distancing standards when gathering personal gear.
- All participants and supporters are expected to clean up and remove any and all of their trash items before departing.
- Leave the field (or immediate area of activity) as soon as reasonably possible, avoiding congregating and minimizing extra-curricular or other social activity not pertaining to the training session or match.
- Vacate the immediate area of the field to allow arrival of other teams that will be using the facility after your activity is finished.
- Consider wearing face masks when departing facilities and you would be in the close proximity of others.
- Coaches or other designated individuals should clean and disinfect balls and other equipment as soon as feasible, ideally while wearing disposable gloves.
- Players and officials should clean and disinfect their own gear, especially anything touched by another individual.
- All participants (players, coaches, referees, etc.) are encouraged to follow established standards which includes washing their hands thoroughly or using hand sanitizer as soon as possible after coming off the field or leaving the facility.
- Avoid congregating in tent areas or using locker rooms or other common changing areas.

We understand that the very nature of the game of soccer makes it impossible for players to avoid all physical contact and adhere to specific distancing rules during a match. Our goal is that by doing our best to follow the guidelines set forth by the USOPC, U.S. Soccer, federal and state authorities, health professionals, and the CDC, SAY members will be able to make informed decisions as to when and how play can best resume. These protocols are strong recommendations that do not have a specific duration or expiration date, but shall, as such, remain in place until rescinded.

SAY Soccer, on its own or as a result of further guidance from authorities and professionals, may revise any or all information contained in this document.

Please contact Executive Director, Doug Wood if you have any questions or concerns.

Cell 513-266-1166 or email dwood@saysoccer.org

Thank you very much for all your efforts to provide a safe soccer experience to the youth in our lives. Thank you for being part of the SAY Soccer family.